

Date: February 24, 2021
TO: Oregon House of Representatives – Committee on Housing
FROM: Jack and Michelle Mantel – Rental Owners, Lane County, Oregon
SUBJECT: Opposition to HB 2372 – Hearing Testimony

We are writing today regarding House Bill 2372 that eliminates “no cause” notices for rental property. **We sincerely request that you DO NOT eliminate the rental owner’s ability to work with our customer in a caring and humane way.**

We are a retired couple living in Springfield who purchased rental property over the course of several years as part of our retirement plan. To do this we lived for years below our means so we could live in dignity when we retired. That time has come and the income we receive from our small business sustains us.

We managed our rental property ourselves for over 20 years, until we recently decided to truly retire and turned the day-to-day transactions over to a small property manager. Although that’s the case, we stay actively involved with our properties. We make sure they are clean and well-maintained. They are properties that we would live in ourselves – in fact when we first got started we lived in a unit exactly like the ones we own.

We love our tenants and strive to maintain good relations with them. We have become friends with some of our past tenants and we are frequently contacted by former tenants asking us if we have an available rental. Our goal is to keep our units rented at all times because that’s the only way we make our income.

Over the 20 years we managed our own properties there were a few times when the tenants were troublesome. This didn’t happen often, but it did happen. Examples include excessive damage found during inspections (sometimes that tenants tried to hide), unauthorized pets and tenants, blatant disregard and disrespect for neighbors and workers, etc. Unfortunately, there are some people that no matter how much you talk to them about their behavior, they simply refuse to cooperate and change.

When it gets to the point that the tenant is outwardly and relentlessly uncooperative, we’ve taken steps to have them leave. Although most of these incidents could be resolved with a “for cause” notice, we still cared about these tenants as people and wanted to give these tenants a fighting chance at finding another rental. Having a “for cause” notice on your record makes finding another rental very difficult. In those cases, we’ve used “no cause” notices which have been very effective for everyone involved.

Having “for cause” notices as the only option for rental owners will have a much bigger impact on homelessness than “no cause” notices. With the lack of “no cause” notices, the number of “for cause” notices will increase because that will be the ONLY tool left for the rental owner.

We are also concerned with the fast-approaching end of the grace periods for rent payments and the impact on tenants who can’t pay back rent. It would be great if simply eliminating “no cause” notices would address the concerns with impending homelessness for those who can’t pay, but it will not. It is a much bigger problem than that and this legislation will only make it worse.

For the record, we are fortunate that the tenants we currently have been able to pay their rent over the past year. If they had not been able to pay we would be in a financial crisis ourselves.

We're sure you hear horror stories of mean and unprofessional rental owners and property managers in an effort to bolster the need for bills like this one. We can all come up with examples of poor performers in every profession. There needs to be laws to deal with situations where people are truly treated badly. We don't need laws that treat every person in that profession as if they are THAT person.

We are members of the Lane County Rental Owner's Association and meet many other rental owners just like us – nice and decent people who are simply trying to build a business and want to provide safe, clean and well-maintained housing for their customers.

We feel that we provide a needed service to our community. We love our community and the people we serve. We want to continue our business, but in light of the recent and pending legislation restricting a rental owner's control over their property we are rethinking our decision to remain rental owners. It would be a great loss to our community if small business rental owners like us decided to leave the business. If we sold our properties, they will likely be managed by a large impersonal property manager or converted to owner-occupied residences. Neither of these choices would be good for tenants or the availability of rental housing.

Please DO NOT pass this bill. DO NOT eliminate the rental owner's ability to work with tenants humanely.

Thank you for your time.